

PLEASURES IN SOCIALISM

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*Leisure and Luxury
in the Eastern Bloc*

Edited and with an introduction by

David Crowley and Susan E. Reid



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The Big Boar: the author's father with his three sons (*the one on the right is the author*), probably 1957

CHAPTER TWELVE

Nomenklatura with Smoking Guns: Hunting in Communist Hungary's Party-State Elite

György Péteri

Tibor Huszár: Did you go hunting? Biszku was a passionate hunter.

Rezső Nyers: No, I did not hunt. I did two sports—I swam in the morning or in the evening, and I played tennis.

Instead of going directly to the “realist” tale (i.e., to provide the reader with an “objectivist” representation and analysis of “what the sources reveal”), I would like to start in a “confessional” mode.¹ I have had personal experience with what I am reporting about in this chapter. The only correct way of describing this experience is to say that I used to be a native of the field observed: I was brought up in the 1950s and 1960s in a *nomenklatura* family in Budapest. After 1956 my father, István Péteri, ranked second—his title was deputy chief of department—at the Department of Administrative Affairs of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party (MSZMP). In 1963 he was transferred to a national authority with the status of a government ministry: he worked until his retirement in 1983, as the first-ranking among three vice presidents of the Central Committee of People’s Control (KNEB).² I lived in my parents’ home during the first twenty-two years of my life, enjoying in some ways most of the privileges yielded by my father’s position. These privileges included, among other things, considerably better-than-average housing; unlimited access to a state-owned car (from 1965 it was a black Mercedes 230 which, together with its chauffeur, Sándor Fábián, stood at my father’s disposal even after working hours, with no limits as to mileage, weekdays, or time); access to

the country's best resort areas at Lake Balaton and elsewhere; access to a well-equipped health care infrastructure (including the services of the National Central Hospital on Kútvolgyi Street); and access to opportunities for hunting in some of the country's absolutely finest wildlife areas. From the age of six until around seventeen (i.e., between 1957 and 1968), I regularly joined my father on his hunting excursions practically every weekend except for the summer months.³ I have a great many memories from those times, and I believe that not to draw on them, or to ignore them while writing a paper on hunting among the elites of communist Hungary, would be dishonest and foolish.

Yet the reader of this paper should not be mistaken in her expectations: I do not intend to give an account of what I partook in or saw and heard, as is usual in the genre of memoirs. This is a scholarly paper based on empirical research, but I will allow my personal experience and knowledge to affect it with regard to facts considered, to questions asked, as well as with regard to the organization of my discussion. In this respect, however, it should also be noted that most of the archival documents and data I have managed to bring together for this paper relate to the "crème de la crème" among elite hunting circles: the "Egyetértés" (Concord) Hunting Club established by, and exclusively for, the top of the power elite, including members of the Communist Party's Political Bureau and Secretariat, members of the government (ministers and state secretaries), and the top leaders of other major institutions of state power (the Presidential Council of the People's Republic, the chairman of the Parliament, the attorney general, the chairman of the Supreme Court, and the president of the Hungarian National Bank).⁴ While my father was invited on a number of occasions to Egyetértés (especially to collective hunts of small game such as hare and pheasant), he was not a member of this exclusive club: Egyetértés was one or two grades too high for his position. From the late 1950s and early 1960s he had his own club: the "May 1st Hunting Club," disposing of excellent territories in the Börzsöny Mountains in northeast Hungary, and shared by a membership of relatively high-ranking functionaries of the party-state.

The Place of Hunting Among the Pastimes of Communist Political Elites

"Did communist leaders go hunting?"—the reader raises her eyebrows incredulously. Indeed, the phenomenon requires some explanation on account of its seeming implausibility. After all, hunting in Hungary (and in most of the countries of communist Eastern Europe) was a recreational activity

intimately associated, in the public imagination of the ancien régime as well as of the postwar communist era, with elite groups considered by communists to have been the most reactionary (landed) components of the former ruling classes (aristocrats and the “gentry”). The news might also come as a surprise because the leisure activities of Hungary’s communist leaders in the postwar era received no publicity whatever at the time.⁵ While newspaper readers in the 1920s would always know where and with whom the prime minister (Count István Bethlen) had been hunting and the number of deers or boars he had shot,⁶ the only news to reach the broad Hungarian public about First Secretary János Kádár’s recreational activities was a short communiqué, most often in the period from July through August, revealing that Comrade Kádár had commenced his annual, ordinary vacation.⁷ Kádár himself had a rather ambivalent attitude toward publicity in this respect. On the one hand, he was proud of his achievements as a hunter: he had quite a few high-class, even gold-medal trophies, and he did not at all mind if they were included in exhibitions or professional publications.⁸ On the other hand, he rejected the offer of a skillful game painter to produce a painting of a beautiful roe deer buck he shot in 1973. Kádár’s arguments were as follows:

As the hunter who shot the game is me, and as the whole matter concerns my person, I have to say in a straightforward manner that such a painting would make it very hard for me to continue hunting, the only leisure that gives me genuine recreation. Other considerations, connected with my official responsibilities [*más—funkciómmal összefüggő—meggondolások*], make the offer completely unacceptable for me.

Kádár begged for the painter’s understanding and forgiveness.⁹ To figure in the trophy lists of the National Directorate of Forestry or in the trophy exhibitions of the Museum of Agriculture was still compatible with the self-image of a semiprofessional hunter who, in his work contributing to the plan targets of agricultural exports, happened to shoot one or another game with an extraordinary trophy. A painting of his gold-medal buck, however, even without Kádár in the picture, would have easily been seen as a celebration of the might of the country’s number-one political personality—thus, his hunting would have been pulled into the public domain and its meaning would have lost its integrity, and its status as an immaculately *private* leisure would have been compromised. Kádár enjoyed his power and seldom hesitated to wield it, but he was also keen on preventing the emergence of

any “cult of the personality” around him which, in his eyes, was crucially dependent on the maintenance of a clear distinction between the private and public spheres of his activities.

But the veil hiding *nomenklatura* hunting cannot prevent us from establishing the fact that hunting was extremely popular among communist elites. For the year 1971, we have a detailed report on the activities in the Egyetértés Hunting Club.¹⁰ In that year, the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party (the top of political power in communist Hungary) had fifteen members. Eight of these fifteen were members of Egyetértés and visited regularly the five estates belonging to the club (Egyetértés had exclusive access to Hungary’s best hunting reserves: Gemenc, Telki, Gyulaj, Mezőföld, and Gödöllő). In the following tables I will present some of the main parameters of their use of the resources in Egyetértés. We’ll take a look at the number of days they visited the estates of Egyetértés, the number of (small and big) game they shot, as well as some indicators of the extent to which they could use the infrastructure and resources of Egyetértés to the benefit of their relatives and other guests.

A comparison with national averages sets the accessibility and “efficiency” of hunting for this top elite into sharp contrast: according to calculations by



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Top military leaders and leading apparatchiks of the Administrative Department of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party Central Committee, probably 1960 or 1961; the author’s father is third from the left

Table 12.1. The amount of time devoted to hunting and the size of the game bag

Names	Number of days spent hunting	Number of big game shot	Number of small game shot
György Aczél	69	72	6
Antal Apró	14	33	0
Béla Biszku	38	38	201
Lajos Fehér	21	20	220
Jenő Fock	90	205	21
Sándor Gáspár	54	12	2,764
János Kádár	16	12	797
Károly Németh	40	57	1,366
Total	342	449	5,375
Average	43	56	672

The source for all three statistical tables in this chapter is MÉM Vadászati és Vadgazdálkodási Főosztály, "Jelentés az Állami Erdő- és Vadgazdaságok 1971. évi működéséről," Dr. Tóth Sándor főosztályvezető, Budapest, January 31, 1972 ("Report on the Operation of the National Farms of Forestry and Game Management in 1971," by Dr. Sándor Tóth, director of the Main Department of Hunting and Game Management of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industries—in the possession of Dr. Tóth).

the Hungarian National Association of Hunters (MAVOSZ) from 1979, the average recreational hunter in Hungary spent 26 days hunting annually and his bag carried no more than 3 pieces of big and 50 pieces of small game.¹¹ (For all the 60 members of the Egyetértés Club, the average number of hunting days was 24, but the average bag carried 29 pieces of big game and 247 pieces of small game in 1971.)

While members of Egyetértés spent altogether 1,452 hunting days¹² at the five estates, they also invited domestic guests (1,144 guest days), as well as guests from abroad (214 guest days). Our data allow us to show the extent to which families, friends, and colleagues of each individual Politburo member listed above could enjoy the resources of Egyetértés.

Among all the guests, the sons of eight club members (hunters themselves) can be identified. Besides the sons of Politburo members already listed in the above table, they are as follows: György Szénási, son of Attorney General Géza Szénási; Imre Cseterki, son of Lajos Cseterki, the secretary of the Presidential Council of the People's Republic; and Gábor Vallus, son of Pál Vallus, first vice president of the National Price Authority and president of MAVOSZ. Hungary's first lady, Mrs. Kádár, often went hunting too, and there are sporadic signs that even Mrs. Aczél and Mrs. Fehér took to a rifle every now and then.¹³

Table 12.2. Visits at the hunting reserves of Egyetértés by family members and domestic guests

Hosting club member	Number of guest days by family members and domestic guests	Number of guest days by sons of club members*
György Aczél	178	0
Antal Apró	2	0
Béla Biszku	21	4 (György Biszku)
Lajos Fehér	4	11 (Lajos Fehér Jr.)
Jenő Fock	20	1 (Jenő Fock Jr.)
Sándor Gáspár	22	? (Gáspár János)
János Kádár	14	0
Károly Németh	19	14 (Károly Németh Jr.)
Total	280	30
Average	35	4

*The names of the sons of several Egyetértés members figure in the list of domestic guests, and their visits are obviously not included in the number of guest days related in the lists to the club members without identifying the visitor's name. This explains why, for example, in the case of Lajos Fehér only four guest days are taken up for 1971, while his son, Lajos Fehér Jr., altogether spent eleven hunting days at two estates (Mezőföld and Gödöllő) of Egyetértés.

Even though we lack the necessary data to compare the time and attention devoted to hunting with the time used for other leisure activities (reading, going to concerts, tourism not related to hunting, playing tennis, etc.), there can be no doubt about the relatively high importance of hunting. On the average, the highest-ranking members of the Egyetértés Club (the members of the Politburo) went hunting on 43 days of the year, which was more than the official number of their paid vacation days.¹⁴ Admittedly, this average from 1971 conceals great variations from year to year as well as the variations from member to member—it includes Prime Minister Fock's 90 days as well as Deputy Prime Minister (later Chairman of Parliament) Antal Apró's 14 days. I still suspect that the average is not misleading, since these days reflect only visits paid to the various reserves of Egyetértés—some members of Egyetértés were also members of other clubs, and all members of the club certainly received (and accepted) a considerable number of invitations to various corners of the country throughout the year.¹⁵ Therefore, in most of the cases, the data we have from Egyetértés should be regarded as a very modest minimum estimate of the total days devoted to hunting.

Another indication of the importance of hunting for the party-state apparatus elite is the considerable amount of time and attention they devoted

to policies of forestry and game management and, especially, to the affairs of Egyetértés and the management of its five reserves. Kádár's interest in hunting turned him into the most important single patron of such personalities as Count Zsigmond Széchenyi, already a passionate hunter and writer of travelogues and hunting stories in the interwar years, whose "expeditions" to Africa and India in the 1960s received crucial support from Kádár.¹⁶ Kádár, together with György Aczél (the country's top politician reigning over cultural and academic life), promoted the publication of popularizing literature and nature (and hunting) films,¹⁷ and their acceptance and consent was decisive in the (re)publication of such ancien régime classics on nature, wildlife, and hunting as those of Otto Herman, Kálmán Kittenberger, Herbert Nadler, and Zsigmond Széchenyi.¹⁸ The importance attached to hunting is also well reflected in top politicians' (members of the Egyetértés Club) deep involvement in issues pertinent to the management of the club's estates. These state-owned (national) farms of forestry and game management were administered by the Department of Hunting and Game Management of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industries. The department had national responsibilities, but it was also directly responsible for controlling and coordinating hunting activities and game management on the reserves kept exclusively for Egyetértés. The director of this department was the "chief protocol hunter," who oversaw the organization and coordination of individual hunting visits to the estates, the reception and hunting provided to high foreign dignitaries (Leonid Brezhnev, for example, was a relatively frequent visitor to the reserves of Egyetértés), and, especially, the collective hunting events such as battues for boar and small game. Both directors in the 1960s and 1970s (István Dénes and Sándor Tóth) had to leave their position because some powerful personalities among the club members (especially Politburo members Béla Biszku and Károly Németh) were displeased with their activities. Dénes, responsible for protocol hunting ever since 1949, was fired because he wished to improve the economy of Egyetértés estates by allowing, at high prices, rich Western hunters into the reserves, and this had allegedly led to the corruption of the professional hunters and other employees at the estates who seemed to no longer pay enough attention to the needs of the "ordinary club members."¹⁹ Dénes's place was taken over by Sándor Tóth, who was also a professional of forestry and game management. His rational ways of husbanding the resources of the Egyetértés estates, and the straightforward manner in which he reported about the current situation and the use of public resources by the club members, often made the top apparatchiks see red until they, indeed, got rid of him by promoting him to a higher position within the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industries where he no

longer had any business with Egyetértés.²⁰ The 1971 report by the ministerial Department of Hunting and Game Management (signed by Sándor Tóth) made it clear that department decisions and policies had often been crossed by interventions on the part of members of Egyetértés who were all too receptive to what they were being told by various local employees at the reserves: "The Comrades hunting at the various reserves are often disturbed by complaints and [policy] suggestions that interfere with the implementation of our unified objectives . . . There are all too often interventions with matters of management. Some of the local game managers act as if they no longer owed obedience to the ministerial authorities [the Department of Hunting and Game Management]."²¹

The Formal and Informal Organization of Hunting

The Ways of Becoming a Club Member

Hunting in socialist Hungary was organized in clubs (*vadásztársaságok*—legally speaking, associations) which operated on territories owned by agricultural cooperatives or state farms of agriculture or of forestry and game management. These clubs carried full economic responsibility attached to game management in their territories: they had to keep and fund personnel as well as the material costs of taking care of the day-to-day operation of game management; they had to pay the forestry or agricultural firms for the damage caused by wildlife in the forests and in agricultural areas. On the other hand, they also generated income by selling live or shot game to the monopolist trading firm, MAVAD. Indeed, most of the meat produced and the live game captured by the clubs had to be delivered to MAVAD and were then exported to hard currency countries. To keep a club financially in balance required serious efforts on the part of its members: they had to shoot (or capture) enough game in order both to earn income and to keep costs (especially payments for damages) at a low level (by restricting the size of game populations).

Several impediments had to be overcome if one wanted to start hunting. (1) A license for possessing hunting weapons had to be obtained from the police. The fate of such an application could not be taken for granted, as it was often decided upon after a meticulous scrutiny on the part of the police authority in Mátyás Rákosi's or János Kádár's (post-1956) Hungary. For shotguns (used for small game) it was relatively easier to get a license. But a license for a rifle was a declaration on the authorities' part that the owner was a trusted citizen of good social standing. Around 1965, no more than 3,000 persons had licenses to hold and use rifles in hunting.²² Even in the

1980s, only 10,000 of a total of 30,000 registered hunters had rifles, and the official policy was that the number of rifle owners should not be increased. It was not without reason that hunters talked about “first-class citizens with a license to have a rifle, and second-class citizens with a license to have only a shotgun.”²³ Sándor Tóth, too, confirmed that “those in possession of rifles had reason to regard themselves as high up socially; they were inside the circle.”²⁴ Also, rifles (and rifle ammunition) were, of course, much more expensive than shotguns. (2) A hunting license was necessary too, and could be acquired only by going through an examination in “the theory and ethics of hunting.” (3) Finally, but not less important, one had to be a member of a hunting club.

The third requirement was the hardest one to fulfill. After some growth from the late 1950s on—more in the number of clubs than in the number of club members—club membership had become by the end of the 1960s almost inaccessible. For young candidates, getting a membership proved to be harder than getting enrolled as a university student (which was really hard), as the president of MAVOSZ admitted in 1974. But the way in which the contemporary journalist understood this problem reveals what appears to have been a *social-hierarchical* impediment in the *commoners'* way of getting admitted to hunting clubs: “It is pretty hard nowadays to become a member of a hunting club [if one is] applying ‘from the street.’”²⁵ Needless to say, it was not leading functionaries of the party-state who were applying “from the street.” Established hunting clubs were hesitant to admit new members, and instead emphasized defending the interests (privileges) of their existing members. As another journalist noted, “One can but agree with the critical opinion that describes the hunting clubs as closed associations of the privileged—a person who wishes to become a member of a club has to wait very long before he would (if at all) get admitted.”²⁶

Nor was it easy to obtain membership through the establishment of new clubs. Legally, hunting clubs were regarded as associations, and as such their establishment was contingent not only upon the benevolence of the Ministry of Agriculture but also upon the permission of the Ministry of the Interior. The Department of Hunting and Game Management had to process (and most often reject) a steady stream of applications from groups who wished to establish hunting clubs and asked for the assignment of various hunting grounds.²⁷

Membership, either by admittance to existing clubs or via establishing new clubs, was therefore in very short supply and, as in the case of other shortage goods, access to it tended to be distributed through transactions among and by the privileged and powerful. Word from the right kind of patron could make wonders happen—like in the case of Ferenc Varga, chair-

man of the successful agricultural cooperative “Óbuda,” whose aspirations to become a member of a hunting club were rejected by the club. He then turned to János Kádár and asked for help. Appreciating Varga’s merits as a successful cooperative leader,²⁸ Kádár intervened on his behalf and asked the president of MAVOSZ, Pál Vallus (himself a member of Egyetértés), to persuade the hunting club in question to admit Varga. In ten days’ time Varga was a club member.²⁹

The establishment of new hunting clubs was also dependent upon access to the proper networks. People in leading positions in my father’s office (including my father) were all well taken care of, but other higher-ranking employees of KNEB (department chiefs and others) also got “contaminated” by the passion for hunting and mobilized their patrons to arrange for their own hunting club. They applied to the Ministry of Agriculture, asking for the assignment of a territory appropriate for big-game hunting. The application carried a list of nine suggested club members, only three of whom had not yet been the member of any hunting club. Most surprising to me among the latter three was to find my mother’s name—this was obviously a tactical move, as both “new membership” and the presence of women improved the chances of a positive response.³⁰

My father lent his support to the application by contacting directly the vice minister reigning over forestry and game management, László Földes (a member of Egyetértés).³¹ The bid on behalf of KNEB was joined and supported by four top-level leaders of the Communist Party Committee of Fejér County.³² This proved to be a powerful combination, and the ministry’s Department of Hunting and Game Management did its best to oblige—the Székesfehérvár Nimród Hunting Club was operative from 1967 on. While his social standing was too low for a membership in Egyetértés, my father’s status for Nimród soon proved too high. He left the club offended when other club members (some of them his employees at KNEB) had objections to securing him and my mother a separate room in the club’s overcrowded cottage over the weekends in the season.³³

Another case of success was when members of the Egyetértés Club managed to arrange for the establishment of two new hunting clubs, one to accommodate former Egyetértés members who retired or left their high positions for other reasons, and another to provide members’ sons with proper hunting grounds. Carving out a part of the Telki Reserve (at Koldusszállás, close to the small provincial city of Tatabánya) in 1974, they established a separate club, Barátság (Friendship), for those members who for various reasons had lost the positions that originally made them eligible for membership in Egyetértés.³⁴ In a similar gesture, already in 1971, Egyetértés “donated” a



Stalking in a big-game area; the author's father and mother and an unknown figure on the left, probably 1957

part of its territories (close to the city of Hatvan) on the basis of which adult sons of the club's members got the unique privilege and chance to establish their own club, the Young Nimrod Club (Nimród Ifjúsági Vadásztársaság). Members of this new club included the sons of Béla Biszku, Lajos Cseterki, Lajos Fehér (but also one of Lajos Fehér's daughters and son-in-law), Jenő Fock, Károly Németh, Ferenc Szűcs, Pál Vallus (vice president of the Price Authority, and president of MAVOSZ), Mihály Koller (general secretary of MAVOSZ), and others.³⁵ János Kádár received an invitation from the "Young Nimróds" to join them in partridge-shooting in Hatvan. In his letter, club president Imre Cseterki, the son of Lajos Cseterki, emphasized: "We, young hunters, have been with great love and devotion preparing for this occasion. Considering especially all the efforts exerted by Comrade Kádár in order to assist the establishment of our hunting club, we would be most appreciative if you could accept our invitation."³⁶ Finally, a similar solution was offered to interested wives of Egyetértés members: the idea was enthusiastically promoted by Mrs. Lajos Fehér, and she was joined by Mrs. Kádár too. Béla Csátári, first secretary of the party's Békés County organization, undertook to "organize" a proper piece of land for them, but the project never reached implementation because the number of wives wishing to become club members failed to reach the necessary minimum.³⁷

All in all, the *nomenklatura* elite asserted their interests in the scramble

for hunting grounds quite effectively through a whole series of hunting clubs possessed and controlled by them by the late 1960s: the high-up generals of the Ministry of Defense launched their own club, the “Máté Zalka” Hunting Club, upon the model of Egyetértés; the high officials of the council of the capital city, Budapest, had their hunting club; and so did the Ministry of the Interior (indeed, they had several clubs), the Attorney General’s Office, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Agriculture (and, within it, the Central Authority of State Farms), the National Council of Trade Unions, and the National Union of Food Industrial Workers; and there were a number of provincial clubs established and run by provincial council and party leaders.³⁸

In its control over the distribution of hunting opportunities, of club memberships, and of hunting grounds, the party-state apparatus elite could to an increasing extent rely upon the National Association of Hungarian Hunters, MAVOSZ. Reading lists of the national and county-level leaders of MAVOSZ in the 1960s and 1970s is like reading lists of the *nomenklatura* of state socialist Hungary. Egyetértés was heavily represented among MAVOSZ’s national board members and leading functionaries in the same way as, at the county level, MAVOSZ local organizations would include MSZMP county secretaries, presidents or vice presidents of the county council, and other dignitaries of the county’s political and economic life. Regulations introduced in 1970 took away the professional supervision and control of game management and hunting from the administrations of county councils, and these responsibilities (and mandates) were transferred to the county organizations of MAVOSZ. The county organizations operated from 1968 with salaried secretaries (as a rule, a person appointed by and loyal to the local *nomenklatura* elite), and they had the right to “delegate” 25 percent of club members to newly established or dissolved and reestablished hunting clubs. As for the working of the new order, we know of cases where middle-level functionaries (county leaders, department chiefs, deputy chiefs of ministries, etc.) tried to execute takeovers. Through MAVOSZ and other authorities, they tried to forcefully dissolve certain hunting clubs which they wished to take into their possession. I am sure that, where the existing hunting clubs could not mobilize patrons powerful enough to counteract the bid, these actions could be successful. In a similar vein, MAVOSZ county organizations had the power to order old club members to undergo the examination for hunters introduced in 1964. Those who failed lost their rights and their club membership which, again, opened opportunities for MAVOSZ to nominate “good comrades to strengthen the club.”³⁹ The county MAVOSZ organization (the provincial apparatchik elite of the

party-state) also exercised full control over hunting when it came to invitations to gratis hunting (*térítésmentes megbívásos vadászat*) on the county's hunting areas. As Sándor Tóth explained it to me,

this enabled the leaders of the county to utilize the gratis invitations towards building up their own networks and pleasing top functionaries of the country. This [system] meant, in practical terms, that good stags or bucks, or whatever game of interest were on offer by the county's hunting clubs for guests, were utilized by county leaders in their own name and they could thus act (and oblige) as generous hosts of top-ranking comrades [from Budapest].⁴⁰

Multiple Club Memberships and Networks of Reciprocity

If, for example, Antal Apró had been invited to hunt by a president of a county council or a county party secretary and if Apró was nicely treated and had a nice hunting experience, well, then that person from that county was invited to Egyetértés.⁴¹

Until 1964 (when Egyetértés was established and thorough legislation regulating hunting in the country was introduced), *nomenklatura* hunting took place to a great extent in a haphazard manner, at the will of central and local party-state bosses. The growing interest of *nomenklatura* circles in hunting from the late 1950s is clearly indicated in the archival documents. One manifestation of this was the higher frequency of serious accidents caused by “functionaries of various political and social organizations” who forced employees of various units of the national forestry and game management to allow them to hunt, even to lend them their weapons, although these functionaries had neither the necessary competence, nor the hunting license, nor a license to use the weapons.⁴²

With the necessary legislation and other normative directives in place, and with the needs of top functionaries well taken care of by protocol hunting on the best reserves, the central authorities launched a campaign to discipline the lower (especially provincial) levels of the *nomenklatura* and confine their hunting to the legally prescribed frameworks. Significantly, one of the objectives of the campaign must have been to keep these lower strata of the apparatus class of the party-state away from the hunting grounds of Egyetértés—from the National Farms of Forestry and Game Management (NFGM). Vice Prime Minister and Politburo member Lajos Fehér's

“Strictly Secret!” circular to all presidents of county councils and municipal councils at the county level (including the council of the capital city, Budapest) is revealing in this respect:

We have been informed that in several counties, council employees, mostly in leading positions, disregard the prevailing law and other binding norms of game management and hunting. In several cases they used their power to extort hunting opportunities from forestry farms and hunting clubs, even when on the territory in question the permitted contingent of shooting game had been fully exhausted and/or, within the frameworks of such a contingent, the hunting opportunities for small game and for trophy game had already been reserved . . . [These uninvited guests], violating the law and the norms [of decent behavior], often fail to pay for catering and for other costs [which then have to be paid for out of the catering budgets of the units upon which the visits were imposed] . . . This illegal hunting and the representation [catering] costs attendant to it are intolerable, they are not compatible with our employees' official duties, and they grossly violate socialist ethical norms [*a szocialista erkölcsöt*]. *The primary objective of the game management of national farms and national farms of forestry is to capture live game for export and breeding purposes, and to generate hard currency incomes by hunting organized for foreigners . . . Therefore, this illegal hunting is not only immoral but it also causes serious economic losses.*⁴³

Of course, besides export, breeding, and hunting by foreigners, game management on national farms also served the members and guests of the Egyetértés Club. But the problem addressed in Fehér's letter clearly shows the great interest in hunting exhibited by provincial party-state functionaries, as well as the resolution of the higher echelons of the political elite to preserve their monopoly rights over the best hunting grounds run by the NFGM.⁴⁴

Under the legal frameworks, then, the only way of increasing the amount and variety of hunting opportunities at one's disposal was either by acquiring membership in several clubs or by establishing and developing informal networks among members of the various hunting clubs, extending invitations to one another on the basis of reciprocity.

Multiple memberships were formally not accepted but were tolerated. Sándor Tóth could identify fourteen such cases of multiple memberships among the members of Egyetértés.⁴⁵ Extending and receiving invitations probably had a greater contribution toward increasing hunting opportunities than multiple club memberships. An indication of the dimensions

of such transactions is that the National Committee of Hunting Ethics of MAVOSZ felt it appropriate to spell out in detail the “Ethical Norms of Inviting Guest Hunters and Accepting Such Invitations” in 1974. The committee started its recommendations by encouraging this kind of hospitality among different hunting clubs, and it emphasized particularly the wisdom of exercising this “noble tradition” by inviting leading functionaries:

Leaders of party and social organizations and state authorities are most welcome guests in hunting. Inviting them makes it possible for them to acquaint themselves with the inner life of our hunting clubs and their economic management: they can form an opinion of the work executed by our hunters, and their useful advice can be fruitfully utilized in our further work.⁴⁶

It cannot be far from the truth to guess that the number and quality of invitations a hunter received increased and improved exponentially as a function of his social-hierarchical position. Also, between significantly different levels of the social-political hierarchy, the reciprocity of these transactions was probably skewed, to the benefit of those in higher positions—that is, those of higher standing could accept more invitations at the expense of issuing fewer ones, than those whose hierarchical position was lower.

True reciprocity tended to prevail among equals. When the initial phase of establishing hunting clubs by “lower-than-top” apparatchiks was over, invitations remained the main way of increasing the quantity and variation of hunting opportunities. The “1st May” Hunting Club in the Börzsöny Mountains, where my father was a member, had no small-game areas at all. My father’s frequent excursions to small-game landscapes were made possible by the many invitations he received. I found photos among the documents he left after his death that were shot on small-game hunts he had been treated to, among others, by the “Máté Zalka” Hunting Club of the Ministry of Defense.

This club had probably the next best situation, after Egyetértés, when it came to the possession of large and excellent hunting grounds: thanks to the proliferation of military (missile) bases in the 1960s in northern as well as southwestern Hungary, civilians were banned from a considerable number of superb areas of big and small game over which the generals (top officials of the Ministry of Defense) successfully asserted exclusive hunting rights. Luckily for my father, during his time as a deputy department chief in the Central Committee apparatus, he established friendly relationships with a number of important members of the Máté Zalka Club: Ferenc Kaszás, Dezső

Trombitás, and Tibor Tarcsay (all generals, vice ministers, or group chiefs in the ministry after 1963–64) all used to be his colleagues in the Central Committee apparatus; he also had some working (and hunting) relations with the general Ferenc Szűcs (the head of military counterintelligence, a great enthusiast of hunting, and a central personality of Egyetértés) and with the minister of defense himself, Lajos Czinege.⁴⁷

The Political and Moral Economy of Hunting: Meat, Hierarchies, and Social Distinction

Resources Appropriated

We have already seen that the annual game bag of elite clubs, such as Egyetértés or the Máté Zalka Club, was several times larger than that of the “average hunter” in Hungary. For this no club member had to pay more than a nominal annual membership fee and sometimes a cost-price for the catering. Let’s look at the summary table of the game bag of Egyetértés for 1971 (table 12.3).

Considering the impressive size of the annual bag and the relatively large number of high-value trophies in it, the game bag itself represented an enormous economic value. Using the same prices for the game bag as the ones paid by foreign (Western) hunters—the only ones who had to pay anything like a market price for both the shooting and the services and infrastructure they used—we would come to shocking amounts. Relying on such prices as applied in 1964, the shooting fee for the eight gold-medal red deer stags alone would have cost half a million forints for the club members (the actual 1971 prices were probably much higher).⁴⁸ Once again,

Table 12.3. The 1971 game bag of Egyetértés

Red deer	Total	668
Red deer	Stags	253
Fallow deer	Total	77
Fallow deer	Bucks	38
Roe deer	Total	171
Roe deer	Bucks	126
Mouflon	Total	11
Mouflon	Rams	11
Boar	Total	839
Small game	Total	14,789



The chief of military intelligence, the minister of defense,
and the author's father pause in shooting small game,
probably 1960 or 1961

what Egyetértés's members shot on the domains of their own club is often significantly less than their individual annual game bag, due to the considerable amount of hunting they could do on invitations.

The second item that should be considered among the resources appropriated was the broad scale of services and the immense infrastructure that the hunter as consumer utilized. (1) One of the major advantages of the *nomenklatura* hunter in the competition for hunting opportunities was his state-owned but privately possessed car. Club members, like Prime Minister Jenő Fock, who visited the reserves of Egyetértés 90 or even 100 times a year could do so because they had at their unlimited disposal a car with a chauffeur who worked as their personal servant. The number of cars owned by private individuals in Hungary remained very low well into the 1970s, which makes *nomenklatura* privileges in this respect even more conspicuous.⁴⁹ Even the NFGM, serving the club, used a considerable amount of its resources to acquire and maintain special four-wheel-drive cars and horse-drawn carriages to be used in connection with hunting. (2) In general, the National Farms provided and took care of an infrastructure that served the *nomenklatura* hunters when they visited their reserves: there were a number of houses (often fine old manor houses) that served their comfort; there were personnel to cook for them⁵⁰ and clean the houses; there were professional hunters who were responsible locally for game manage-

ment but who also acted as guides, advisers, and assistants for club members when they visited the various reserves; and on the occasions of battues, a whole army of beaters was recruited from the nearby villages for around fifty forints or a hare each day. (3) Members of Egyetértés received their ammunition gratis from the Department of Hunting and Game Management of the Ministry of Agriculture. Good-quality ammunition was manufactured specially for the protocol hunters of Egyetértés by the Hungarian Nitrokémia Works at Fűzfő (otherwise, the ammunition, especially ammunition for shotguns, accessible for commoners had rather a bad reputation).⁵¹ (4) Egyetértés had a unique situation (unlike other *nomenklatura* hunting clubs) in that the club lived in a symbiotic relationship with the NFGM. The National Farms operated as a fiscal organization financing their expenses (investments as well as current costs) out of grants in the state budget, and paying all their incomes into the same budget. It is little wonder that the National Farms prospered—their operation benefited the same top politicians who in effect decided upon the amount of public resources that were allotted to them every year. In 1963 the budget of the National Farms was 10 million forints; by the late 1960s it had grown to around 60–70 million forints; and by around 1985 it had increased to 350 million, channeled partly in investments into new luxury hunting houses built for the convenience of *nomenklatura* hunters.⁵²

Besides the unique outing and hunting opportunities, the infrastructure, and the supplies of various services and ammunition to which the *nomenklatura* hunter had practically gratis access, we should also mention an almost vulgarly materialistic aspect: there was a great deal of meat to be brought home from hunting. There was a norm (called the *kompetencia*) according to which each hunter in Hungary could free of charge take home sixty kilograms of big game (one kilogram of big game could be replaced with one pheasant or a hare) every year. From each battue, Egyetértés members could take three pieces of small game or two kilograms of big game (battues were also organized in boar hunting). On individual hunts one could retain meat out of the game bag at the price the MAVAD would have given for it to the NFGM. This price was about half of the retail prices of comparable first-class pork or beef.⁵³ In other words, *nomenklatura* hunting yielded high-quality meat at low costs. In my family's meat consumption from the late 1950s on, game figured very high. I also remember that my father and his friends themselves produced sausages and salami of boar and deer for family consumption, which was extremely popular in our circles. Large demand of this sort is in evidence in the history of the Egyetértés Club too: the club used the services of the Szeged Salami Factory (where the well-known Pick Salami is produced) to process game and deliver, on

the individual club members' orders, a variety of sausages and salamis at very lenient prices.⁵⁴

Hierarchies and Social Distinction

No doubt hunting had been by tradition a gentlemen's sport in Hungary and, especially when it came to big game (red deer, fallow deer, roe deer, bear [for pre-1918 Hungary], and boar), it can even be said to have been a sport for the high nobility or aristocracy. The simple reason for this is that, from the early medieval era, hunting rights went hand in hand and were spatially coextensive with the ownership of lands, and the best and richest hunting grounds constituted parts of large estates that were mostly in the hands of aristocratic families until as late as 1945.⁵⁵ Hunting became a marker of social distinction which even affected the value and meaning of small-game hunting (i.e., hunting for hare, pheasant, partridge, bustard, waterfowl), where the accessibility of hunting areas was slightly more "democratic" than in the case of big game. The late nineteenth century and the interwar years saw the spread of recreational hunting among urban middle-class and even lower middle-class circles,⁵⁶ thanks to the possibilities of hiring communal areas in the "green belts" surrounding major cities (these areas were rented out in competitive auctions, and complaints over steeply rising prices during the interwar period indicate the growing popularity of hunting among social groups other than the traditional landed elites).⁵⁷ Nonetheless, the prevalent image of (big-game) hunting even after 1945 was that it was the exclusive pastime of the aristocracy.

Against this "stigmatizing" background it is understandable that the press of the communist era (as well as the propaganda of MAVOSZ) claimed repeatedly that the new socialist social order "democratized" hunting, making it accessible to those who, in the ancien régime, could only get close to hunting as beaters.⁵⁸ Besides "democratized hunting," another discursive avenue to cement the social reputation of hunting (and elite hunting) was the claim that hunting was a socioeconomically useful and ecologically important activity whose heroes, who exerted physical efforts for no remuneration using their free time, were the hunters themselves. Thanks to the regulations of the early 1960s reinforcing rational (scientific) wildlife management, elite hunters could pose as workers whose contribution was essential to maintaining and running a branch of the socialist economy that yielded substantial hard currency revenues through exports of meat and live game as well as by attracting hunting tourism from the West to Hungary. Also, hunters (and elite hunters) under state socialism partook in the transnational discourse that construed hunting as a crucial replacement

for missing predators. Thus, it was argued, hunting was not only essential for maintaining the ecological balance within wildlife, but it also made a significant contribution toward securing the high quality of the game stocks by regularly “culling the herd,” that is, selectively shooting low-quality individuals. To show that they shared the order applying to other hunting societies, Egyetértés every now and then made gestures to assert a strict regime of rationing in order to restrict the shooting of red deer and fallow bucks with high-class trophies, in order to leave these for rich Western visitors, and to concentrate instead on “substandard individuals” which, it was said, had to be prevented from playing a role in reproduction.⁵⁹

By the mid-1960s, *nomenklatura* hunting had by and large been squeezed into the confines of “socialist legality,” and apparatchiks of various descriptions were hunting with licensed weapons, on the basis of hunting licenses and as members of hunting clubs. In spite of regularly repeated assurances about the “democratic nature” of hunting under socialism, even the publicly accessible general social statistics of the hunters’ “community” could reveal a strong bias in the distribution of hunting opportunities to the benefit of the general category of “professionals, intellectuals,” or “white-collar employees” (where the *nomenklatura* was tucked away). In 1970 slightly more than 25 percent of all active earners belonged to the group of “managers and intellectuals” and “middle-level employees” (clerks, intellectuals).⁶⁰ Newspaper reports from press conferences granted by the officials of MAVOSZ regularly placed the share of “physical workers” in hunters’ societies at around 50 percent.⁶¹ In other words, the group of managers, professionals, and white-collar workers (and, if it had been possible to separate from among them, the *nomenklatura*) were strongly overrepresented in the membership of hunting clubs.

This skewed distribution of hunting opportunities was reinforced to the extreme by the already mentioned restrictions applying to the procurement and holding of weapons. Even as late as the 1980s, less than a third of socialist Hungary’s hunters had the right to dispose of and use rifles—the rest had to content themselves with shotguns. Obviously, hunting with a rifle implied a world both quantitatively and qualitatively different from that of hunting with a shotgun. The rifle went hand in hand with big-game hunting in large expanses of mountain areas covered by forests; the shotgun, on the other hand, meant small-game hunting in rather restricted, flat, and agriculturally cultivated landscapes.⁶²

The strong stratification of hunters’ society was further enhanced by the highly unequal situation of different clubs in terms of the quality of their territories and the resources at their disposal. Elite clubs, like Egyetértés or the Máté Zalka Hunting Club, appropriated a great deal of public resources.

To begin with, the hunting grounds under their control were large and had the richest and highest-quality game populations in the country. Of the two named, however, Egyetértés was obviously the superior one. Trophy statistics make this quite obvious: in a period of six years (1970–75), Egyetértés members shot 71 stags of red deer and 60 bucks of fallow deer with gold-medal antlers. The Máté Zalka Hunting Club, although it disposed of much more extensive domains than Egyetértés, could “only” boast of 60 gold-medal antlers of red deer and 7 gold-medal antlers of fallow bucks, all shot in a period of 15 years.⁶³ The majority of the fallow deer population in the country had its habitat on two reserves (Gyulaj and Telki) belonging to Egyetértés.

Just as much as hunting remained an elite form of recreation, so did hierarchies prevail even within the top hunting clubs. In the generally privileged Egyetértés, special privileges were enjoyed by the most powerful Politburo members. János Kádár, Jenő Fock, Béla Biszku, and Lajos Fehér had their own favorite territories, hunting houses, and even favorite professional hunters over whose services they asserted priority claims. The Pilis area and its professional leader, Oszkár Dvorák, with the house at Hamvaskő, “belonged” to Lajos Fehér in the sense that if he wished to go out hunting there, then it was his house. The old hunting castle of Metternich at Gyarmatpuszta “belonged” to Béla Biszku and Jenő Fock. Between Christmas and three days after New Year’s Eve, no one could challenge János Kádár’s priority when it came to two areas of the Gemenc Reserve (Veránka and Upper Gemenc, taken care of by the professional hunters János Berek and István Parti).⁶⁴

The Egyetértés Club was rather restrictive with invitations, and I agree with Sándor Tóth that this was so probably because “they did not wish to show outsiders how they were living and hunting, as they would not have liked to hear or read critical comments about their privileged situation.” The few invitations that were issued, however, carefully targeted people who deserved an invitation for their good services to Egyetértés or who were on their way to top levels within the *nomenklatura*: “If a political leader from a county was invited to hunt, that was most often because the person in question was going to be promoted to a national top position (Kádár knew, of course, that they were going to appoint him).” That such an event was of great significance in the everyday life of the *nomenklatura* is clearly shown by the fact that secretaries of MSZMP county organizations went out of their way to prevent their lower-ranking employees from participating in Egyetértés hunts.⁶⁵

Members of Egyetértés also signaled their status by retaining the services of several professional hunters from the ancien régime. Endre Nagy,

Ákos Szederjei, Oszkár Barát, István Parti, Kornél Böröcki, Géza Gosztonyi, Antal Fuchs, Ferenc Stoflitz, Oszkár Dvorák, János Berek, and others were professional hunters (and/or sons of professional hunters) who distinguished themselves in the service of pre-1945 large estates owned by aristocratic families or the clergy. Many of these people had excellent rapport with János Kádár, György Aczél, and other leading members of Egyetértés.⁶⁶

That hunting brought with it social status and distinction or, putting it another way, that access to hunting required social status, was rather clear to the rank and file too. They hardly bought the propaganda which maintained that in hunting “social differences ceased to exist—all club members are but hunters.”⁶⁷ Indeed, we know of an occasion when they tried to cheat the social order of hunting and establish a hunting club by faking the inclusion of high *nomenklatura* personalities among their members.⁶⁸ The reaction of the controlling authority is most revealing:

I find it extremely remarkable that the hunting club in question was established under the circumstances described and I think MAVOSZ should not accept this. I find it quite impossible to believe that on July 19, comrades István Dobi and Ernő Mihályfi were present at the meeting in Vértesszőllős. The whole protocol is a flagrant abuse of their names. Comrade [Vice Minister Gyula] Balassa will contact Comrade Dobi in this matter . . . It would not at all surprise me if the minutes would prove to be a vulgar fake. *It cannot be regarded as normal that Comrade István Dobi, who has at his disposal any of the national reserves (which is only natural), would wish to “enter” the Sólyom Club of Vértesszőllős, where truck driver József Horváth is the chairman, and he would serve as “political officer,” while the “master hunter” would be Comrade Ernő Mihályfi, one of the leaders of the Patriotic People’s Front. Remarkable names, oddly misplaced [Elgondolkoztató nevek, különös beosztásban].* I cannot see it as probable that Comrades Dobi and Mihályfi are aware of these, for them, not too honorable appointments and the minutes. Or will it be the same István Csató, identified in the minutes as controller, who will control Comrade István Dobi?⁶⁹

Department chief Dénes’s horror over imagining Comrade Dobi as a member of the Sólyom Club where the chairman was a simple truck driver epitomizes a social world that was not only discriminating and exclusive against the lower classes but also firmly placed hunting among the terrains of sociability (and forms of luxury consumption) demarcated for elite leisure.

Conclusion

My father was born and grew up in the interwar era. In his teenage years (the late 1930s and the war years) he started working in the Budapest textile industries and joined the Social Democratic youth organization and later the underground Communist Party. By then, it had become a tradition among Budapest socialist working-class youth to arrange much of their political and social life around hiking excursions to the hills and mountains to the northwest and northeast of the capital city. This kind of outing was practically the only accessible way for them to enjoy nature, to breathe fresh air, and to relax. The outings were also regarded as a useful conspiratorial practice in their efforts to escape the gaze of the political police (whose efficiency, however, was seriously undermined by the presence of numerous informers among its own ranks). This legacy of the past in the workers' movement certainly played some role in the upsurge of interest in hunting, especially after 1956. But hunting was more importantly one of the scarce opportunities for many of them to deploy the status and power they wielded in gaining *private* pleasure. In fact, opportunities for making one's high social status yield an "income" in terms of improved personal well-being were relatively restricted under the state socialist social order.⁷⁰ Normally, one could not amass a large private fortune and let it grow (in this respect, the opportunities to turn privileged access to *communal* infrastructure such as top-level rental housing into private fortunes came during the extensive privatization in the transition period after 1989). Forms of "conspicuous consumption" like the collection of rare coins, the private import of expensive Western furniture, and so on could easily become suspicious (since the salaries even of high functionaries were not lavishly high) and lead to scandals and even tragedies. Hunting, however, was a singularly appropriate hobby and form of leisure for which to develop and cultivate a "passion." With their exclusive hunting grounds in mostly uninhabited parts of the countryside, hunting clubs offered a benevolent refuge from the public eye. The general public could not know much about the particular circumstances attendant to the hunting of the apparatus class (or about the exceptional privileges enjoyed by them in terms of exclusive access to the best areas, the infrastructure and services extended to them by the state farms of forestry and wildlife management, etc.). The strict regulations of the first half of the 1960s were put in place in order, among other things, to enhance this privacy. Through disciplining and "normalizing" the hunting activities of the country's provincial and Budapest-based apparatchiks, Kádár managed to suppress the anarchic poaching that had been widespread among them during the late 1950s, and

to secure optimal conditions to achieve a happy symbiosis between “socialist legality,” rational forestry, and wildlife management, on the one hand, and the apparatus class’s hunting interests, on the other.⁷¹

The communist takeover accomplished in Hungary in 1948 was not confined to political power. The socioeconomic transformation commencing during⁷² and continuing right after the war yielded not only a political economy characterized by the maximal expansion of state ownership over the nation’s wealth and productive infrastructure, but also resulted in a social order in which party-state apparatchiks could and did assert themselves as the new ruling class.⁷³ They owned the state and the state owned the country. As the owners of exclusive disposition rights over all the resources belonging to the state, they were the monopolists of the political sphere and, at the same time, the privileged proprietors and beneficiaries of the country’s major infrastructures serving private comfort, pleasure, and leisure. Taking over all positions of political, economic, and administrative decision-making at local, regional, and national levels, concurrently and just as self-evidently they also settled in and took over the villas, houses, and summer and winter resorts of the old ruling classes.⁷⁴ Indeed, they took over not only the habitat but also the habits of their predecessors who constituted the main targets of their rhetoric of class hatred, especially in the early years of their power.⁷⁵ The solution to this seeming paradox lies partly in the political economy of the expropriation of the surplus value under state socialist conditions. The great bulk of this expropriation took the form of macroeconomic decisions of central planning affecting the division of annual national income between “consumption” and “accumulation.” But part of the surplus value had to be used as dividends rewarding the party-state apparatus for its role and services in administering and maintaining the system. In an economy, however, where both market regulation and the accumulation of *private capital* were severely restricted, the appropriation of this part of the surplus value tended to happen *in natura* rather than in monetary form. Privileged access, at no or merely nominal prices, to health care with up-to-date medical technologies, to the finest recreational facilities (including the best hunting grounds, their personnel and complete infrastructure), to the highest-quality segments of communal housing, to a vast park of often luxurious cars, to the best secondary and higher education institutions for one’s children, to the most sought-after opportunities for travel abroad, and so on—these were all forms of private appropriation of the social surplus. But they also had an instrumental as well as symbolic role in the social reproduction of status and class position. As we have seen, hunting, calculated at market prices, enabled its apparatchik practitioners to appropriate values several times their annual salaries. However, a membership in or regular invitations to the Egyetértés

or other hunting clubs of the party-state apparatus elite also confirmed class affiliation and conferred social distinction.

Notes

The author is glad to acknowledge the inspiration he received from his conversations with Bruce W. Hevly over an early draft of this chapter. The epigraph for this chapter is from Tibor Huszár, *Beszélgetések Nyers Rezsővel (Conversations with Rezső Nyers)* (Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó, 2004), 277–78.

1. For the distinction between the realist and confessional genres, and other thoughtful distinctions pertinent to the various writing conventions and representational styles prevalent in ethnography (anthropology), see John Van Maanen, *Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

2. KNEB (Központi Népi Ellenőrzési Bizottság) was the state audit authority with sweeping mandates and powers to control, from the point of view of law and national political objectives, the working of all sectors and all units operative in the country's economic and social life (all business operations irrespective of the form of ownership, and all other operations funded publicly). The KNEB had the same legal status as the Supreme Court or the Attorney General's Office. Its president had a rank (state secretary) next to minister, while his first deputy (my father) was ranked as a vice minister. They were appointed by the Presidential Council of the Hungarian People's Republic.

3. In the late spring and summer months of May–August we went fishing.

4. See Sándor Tóth, *A hírnév kötelez: Vadászat és vadgazdálkodás Magyarországon, 1945–1990 (Obliging Reputation: Hunting and Wildlife Management in Hungary, 1945–1990)*, 2nd enl. ed. (Budapest: Nimród Vadászújság, 2005), 126–27.

5. *Nomenklatura* hunting and its “achievements” were consistently kept away from the public eye. An episode typical of this is as follows: Egyetértés circulated among its members a satirical illustrated newsletter issued annually on the occasion of the club's end-of-the-year party. Its title was *Fácán Matyi* (the official satirical weekly magazine, the Hungarian counterpart of the Soviet *Krokodil*, was called *Ludas Matyi*). One of *Fácán Matyi*'s issues scornfully cites the wording of a news item carried by the tabloid daily *Esti Hírlap*: “20 fallow bucks were brought down during the October hunting season in Gyulaj, the famous reserve. Two native hunters have shot bucks with antlers weighing 4.37 and 4.46 kilograms, which are outstanding even among those winning gold medals. Indeed, they are not far off the world record trophies.” On the illustration attached to the news (a drawing except for the heads, which are photos of the hunters), Politburo members Lajos Fehér and Béla Biszku are dancing *csárdás* in folk costumes and boots and a subtext says: “Two native hunters have shot beyond the world record” (*Fácán Matyi*, December 1970, 5). The text obviously referred to the fact that Fehér had twice shot fallow bucks with world record antlers in Gyulaj (see Bányai József, *Világrekord trófeák a Magyar Mezőgazdasági Múzeumban* [Budapest: Magyar Mezőgazdasági Múzeum, 1994]), and so did probably even Biszku, although he, unlike Fehér or Kádár, never donated his trophies to the Museum of Agriculture.

6. Ignác Romsics, *István Bethlen: A Great Conservative Statesman of Hungary, 1874–1946* (Highland Lakes, N.J.: Atlantic Research, 1995), 26.

7. I must admit that it was also publicly known about Kádár that he liked chess. But there was no publicity to his other favorite pastime: the very popular, lower-class card game in Hungary called *ulti*[*mo*]. On his private hunting excursions when he slept over at one of the reserves, he had with him a small and rather constant circle of people (the general Ferenc Szűcs, surgeon Zoltán Szabó, Kádár's bodyguard Ferenc Sebestyén, and Sándor Tóth, director of protocol hunting and head of the Department of Hunting and Game Management of the Ministry of Agriculture). As Sándor Tóth recalls, "In the evenings, after dinner, we had to work: *ulti* . . . Kádár was a very skillful card-player" (author's interview with Sándor Tóth, Budapest, June 25–26, 2004).

8. See Kádár's letters instructing officials of the National Directorate of Forestry as to which of his (and his wife's) trophies should be displayed; he was also careful to see to it that the visitors to the exhibition should not be able to see that they had several trophies from the same date: Kádár to Ernő Zsámbor, March 14, 1960; and G. Balassa to Kádár, December 21, 1960, Kádár János Titkárságának iratai, MOL M-KS-288, f. 47, cs. 730 őe. (papers of János Kádár's Secretariat, Hungarian National Archives).

9. Exchange of letters between Róbert Muray and János Kádár, May 23, 1973. Kádár János Titkárságának iratai, MOL M-KS-288, f. 47, cs. 756 őe.

10. MÉM Vadászati és Vadgazdálkodási Főosztály (Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industries Chief Department of Hunting and Game Management), "Jelentés az Állami Erdő- és Vadgazdaságok 1971. évi működéséről," Dr Tóth Sándor főosztályvezető, Budapest, January 31, 1972 ("Report on the Operation of the National Farms of Forestry and Game Management in 1971," by Dr. Sándor Tóth, director of the Main Department of Hunting and Game Management of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industries—in the possession of Dr. Tóth). This report was qualified "Strictly Confidential" after it was read by some members of the Egyetértés Club. As Tóth told me in the course of my interview with him, several Egyetértés members were immensely irritated by all of the personal details included in the eighteen pages and seven appendices of the report. I am most grateful to Sándor Tóth for having provided me with a copy of this important document.

11. R.J.I., "A férfiak sportja: Huszonnyolcezer puskás ember" ("The Sport of Men: Twenty-Eight Thousand Men with Guns"), *Magyar Hírlap*, November 16, 1979. All press materials quoted in this paper have been consulted in the excellent collection of newspaper clippings held by the Open Society Archives, Budapest.

12. A visit to Valkó (one of the starting points for hunters visiting the Gödöllő Reserve, some 40–50 kilometers northeast from the center of Budapest) right after working hours on a weekday afternoon was counted as a "hunting day." The Telki Reserve was even closer to Budapest (about 20–30 kilometers east)—83 of the 90 "hunting days" of Prime Minister Jenő Fock were spent there, and it is quite probable that most of the visits were such short late afternoon tours made without sleeping over.

13. This is quite apparent from the photos published in Tóth, *A hírnév kötelez*, as well as from MÉM Vadászati és Vadgazdálkodási Főosztály, "Jelentés az Állami Erdő," where Mrs. Kádár and Mrs. Aczél are identified in the Egyetértés's annual game bag as hunters who shot three stags and seven boars (Mrs. Kádár) plus one stag (Mrs. Aczél). See also the trophy lists of the Egyetértés Club for 1970–75: *Trófea Bemutató—Az Erdő- és Vadgazdaságok területén 1970: Évi bógés idején elejtett szarvas- és dámbikák tróféáiról*, printed by the Erdészeti Műszaki és Szervezési Iroda, Budapest, in 120 copies—(same for 1970, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1974, 1975).

14. János Kádár had probably the longest vacation, which, according to a source of mine from the mid-1960s was six weeks, that is, 42 days total (or 36 working days). See the “Top Secret!” medical report on the state of health and suggestions for diet and lifestyle for János Kádár by the Central National Hospital of Kútvolgyi Street, signed by hospital director Imre Fenyvesi and Kádár’s personal doctor of internal medicine, Imre Gergely: Kádár János Titkárságának iratai, MOL M-KS-288, f. 47, cs. 735 őe.

15. For a few examples of such invitations coming in to János Kádár, see Kádár János Titkárságának iratai, MOL M-KS-288, f. 47, cs. 724 őe. (István Szabó’s and Zoltán Szabó’s letter to Kádár); and 756 őe. (István Gergely’s letter to Kádár).

16. For some of Kádár’s contacts with Count Széchenyi and his widow, see Kádár János Titkárságának iratai, MOL M-KS-288, f. 47, cs. 733 őe. and 762 őe.

17. Kádár personally intervened at various points of time to assist the projects of István Homoki-Nagy, a director of feature films with animal casts, with a great deal of footage in areas with the richest wildlife in the country (like Gemenc or the Hortobágy), and with plenty of episodes with hunting. For some of Kádár’s contacts with Homoki-Nagy, see Kádár János Titkárságának iratai, MOL M-KS-288, f. 47, cs. 739 őe.

18. For a bibliography of hunting-related literature published in Hungary, see György Vuray, Gábor Fodor Rácz, and Zoltán Szabó, eds., *A magyar vadászirodalom képeskönyve: Vadászat és horgászat az irodalomban és a képzőművészetben* (Budapest: Mezőgazda Kiadó, 2000). The “rehabilitation” of Kittenberger, Nadler, and Széchenyi, “auf Kádár’s Wunsch” (according to Kádár’s wish), is acknowledged by (Count) Philipp Meran, *Wenn die Wolken weiterziehen: Ein Leben für die Jagd* (Graz and Stuttgart: Leopold Stocker Verlag, 1992), 48.

19. For Dénes’s case, see his letter to János Kádár, November 16, 1963, as well as the latter’s exchanges with Károly Németh and Béla Biszku, all in Kádár János Titkárságának iratai, MOL M-KS-288, f. 47, cs. 734 őe.

20. Author’s interview with Sándor Tóth, Budapest, June 25–26, 2004.

21. MÉM Vadászati és Vadgazdálkodási Főosztály, “Jelentés az Állami Erdő,” 9.

22. Author’s telephone interview with Sándor Tóth, October 31, 2005.

23. Imre Szász, *Ez elment vadászni*. . . (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1984), 84. (The title of this book—a documentary report about hunting in the Hungarian countryside—is untranslatable: it is a passage from a children’s rhyme. If translated literally it can be rendered as “This [one] has gone to hunt . . .”).

24. Author’s interview with Sándor Tóth, Budapest, June 25–26, 2004. A revealing document in this respect is the letter of István Dénes, head of the Department of Hunting and Game Management of the National Directorate of Forestry, to Police Captain Szabó of the Gödöllő Police District. The Police Department was inclined to reject the application of Antal Fuchs Jr. for licenses both for shotgun and for hunting rifle. The motivation was Fuchs’s bad (“class-alien”) social background: he came from a family of professional hunters of the old regime—his father, Antal Fuchs Sr., served on Count Tamás Eszterházy’s estate as chief hunter. Dénes emphasized that nothing incriminating could be found in Fuchs’s records and that the young Fuchs was among the professionals of game management who enjoyed a high reputation. István Dénes to Police Captain Szabó, September 9, 1959, copy, documents of the Ministry of Agriculture, Hungarian National Archives, MOL XIX-K-13–a 174, d. 1959, 58–1/486/1959. Antal Fuchs Jr. worked at the Gödöllő Reserve, which was one of the “protocol

areas" even before 1964, when Egyetértés was formally established. For a short biography of Antal Fuchs Sr., see Antal Fuchs Jr., "Id. Fuchs Antal, 1883–1968," in *Száz év, száz vadász* (*One Hundred Years, One Hundred Hunters*), ed. Sándor Békés (Budapest: Millenniumi Vadászati Bizottság, 2001), 86, which confirms that, after 1956, Fuchs Sr. again enjoyed full recognition for his professional competence.

25. "Milliók—Kedvtelésből" ("Millions, for the Fun of It"), *Figyelő*, November 27, 1974.

26. F.B., "Nyitott kapuk?" ("Open Doors?"), *Szabad Föld*, December 8, 1974.

27. A couple of examples: "Vadászterület iránti kérelem," MOL XIX-K-13-a, 247 d. 8501/1962; Miskolci Városi Tanács VB. Elnökhelyettese ír földművelésügyi miniszternek, vt. alakítása és vadászterület kérése, MOL XIX-K-13-a, 137, d. 1958, 25-1/246/1958; A Homokvasút és Kerületi Hányóüzem MSZMP alapszervezete, Dorog, levele Kádár János et.nak vadászterület elvételének sérelmezése, MOL XIX-K-13-a, 174, d. 1959, 58-1/138/1959. All these documents (applications and complaint regarding hunting grounds) are in the papers of the Ministry of Agriculture at the Hungarian National Archives.

28. I happen to know that Varga had a good reputation and also a certain popularity because of his cooperative's semiprivate services, on often very advantageous terms, for many high officials of the party-state (these services were connected with building, renovating dachas, taking care of gardens, etc.).

29. For the related exchanges of letters from October 1985, Kádár János Titkárságának iratai, MOL M-KS-288, f. 47, cs. 774 őe.

30. The share of women among the officially registered hunters of communist Hungary never reached 1 percent. In 1974 only 80 of about 25,000 hunters were women (József Simányi, "Évente több mint tízmillió lövés: Beszélgetés dr. Koller Mihállyal, a MAVOSZ főtitkárával" ["More Than Ten Million Shots Annually: Conversation with Dr. Mihály Koller"], *Magyar Hírlap*, July 21, 1975).

31. By the time this application was filed, my mother had gone through two major operations with slipped disks and she was not at all fit for the physical exercises attendant to hunting. The whole documentation of the case from 1964 can be found in "NEB 'Béke' Vt. részére a Vérteskozmai 806-os vadászterület bérbeadása," MOL XIX-K-13-a, 324, d. 14, t. 12589/1964, Országos Erdészeti Főigazgatóság (National Directorate of Forestry, which was a division of the Ministry of Agriculture).

32. Ödön Fácányi, *Egy hajdani vadásztársaság: A Székesfehérvári (Csákvári) Nimród vadásztársaság története 1967–1997* (*A Hunting Club of the Past: The History of the Nimrod Hunting Club in Székesfehérvár [Csákvár], 1967–1997*) (Budapest: Nimród Alapítvány, n.d.), 23.

33. Interview with László Fekete-Győr in Fácányi, *Egy hajdani*, 102.

34. Author's interview with Sándor Tóth, Budapest, June 25–26, 2004.

35. There were altogether twenty-five "Young Nimrods," including the sons and daughters of Egyetértés members as well as their invited friends and student comrades (author's interview with Sándor Tóth, Budapest, June 25–26, 2004). It is disturbing to see the rather cynical manner in which Mihály Koller, general secretary of MAVOSZ, presented to the press the establishment of the Young Nimrod Club (carefully leaving out who the members were): "We [MAVOSZ] believe it is extremely important to rejuvenate the membership of hunting clubs and, especially, [to make good use of] the educational effects of the communities of hunting clubs upon the youth . . . Even a separate club has been established for young people in the neighborhood of Hatvan

under the name Young Nimrod. They work with great enthusiasm, they hunt and they husband [their resources]" (Jenő Csalló, "Vadgazdálkodás és vadászat" ["Wildlife Management and Hunting"], *Magyar Hírlap*, February 7, 1972).

36. Imre Cseterki's letters to János Kádár, September 26 and October 5, 1972, Kádár János Titkárságának iratai, MOL M-KS-288, f. 47, cs. 774 őe. As I said, the "Young Nimrods" could launch their club only thanks to the fact that Egyetértés accepted the transfer to them of one of their finest small-game areas in the Hatvan region (originally belonging to the Gödöllő estate). In the name of "socialist legality," the transfer went through the council of Pest County—Pest County took into its possession the territory from the Gödöllő National Farm of Forestry and Game Management; but the county had been given to understand that Comrade Kádár and other comrades wished this piece of land to be let out for the Nimrod Youth Hunting Club. The loss suffered by Egyetértés was immediately "compensated" by qualifying the Soponya estate as a national farm of game management, thus establishing exclusive access to the area for the Egyetértés Club. Soponya is about a hundred kilometers southwest of Budapest and is arguably the most superb small-game land in the country; it is also where, at the age of fourteen, I shot my first and only game, a hare and a pheasant.

37. Author's interview with Sándor Tóth, Budapest, June 25–26, 2004.

38. Ibid.

39. See Szász, *Ez elment vadászni*, 91–92.

40. Author's interview with Sándor Tóth, Budapest, June 25–26, 2004.

41. Ibid.

42. Letter of Pál Ágoston, head of main department, Attorney General's Office, to the National Directorate of Forestry, December 31, 1960, "Vadászati balesetek megelőzésére irányuló intézkedések megtétele" ("The implementation of measures to prevent hunting accidents"), papers of the Ministry of Agriculture, Hungarian National Archives, MOL XIX-K-13-a 228, d. 117–1/7/1961. See, also here, the response of István Dénes, head of the Department of Hunting and Game Management, January 11, 1961, which tells about high-level intervention in the matter (strict instructions to stop the anarchistic hunting by functionaries issued to the provincial party organizations by the Central Committee secretary György Marosán).

43. The circular, dated April 3, 1964, is printed in its entirety in Sándor Tóth, *A hírnév kötelez: Vadászat és vadgazdálkodás Magyarországon, 1945–1990*, 1st ed. (Budapest: Nimród Alapítvány, 1998), 67–68 (my emphasis). This circular was preceded by a similar circular to all directors of the National Farms of Forestry by the vice minister of agriculture and leader of the National Forestry Directorate, Gyula Balassa, on January 10, 1964. Its subject matter was "Stopping irregular hunting"—published in Sándor Tóth's just-quoted book, on page 66. It is very probable that similar circulars were sent from the Central Committee apparatus to the county and lower-level MSZMP organizations.

44. The campaign may have been successful with regard to maintaining the "integrity" of the hunting grounds of Egyetértés. What it could achieve beyond that is highly questionable: a sociological survey made in the first half of the 1980s revealed that the local and national *nomenklatura* regularly extorted various "favors" (*szíves-ség*) from the chairmen of agricultural cooperatives—one of these favors was the arrangement of hunting excursions for them. See Árpád Pünköszt, *Az elithez tartozni: A tévészelnökök kapcsolatrendszere* (*Belonging to the Elite: The Networks of Chairmen of*

Agricultural Cooperatives) (Budapest: Tömegkommunikációs Kutatóközpont, 1986), 62 and 66–67. The book was qualified as “Belső kiadvány” (internal publication), which meant that it was not publicly accessible.

45. Author’s interview with Sándor Tóth, Budapest, June 25–26, 2004.

46. The document, dated Budapest, February 25, 1974, is reproduced in Tóth, *A hírnév kötelez*, 1998, 168–69.

47. I am in the possession of a postcard from Defense Minister Lajos Czinege which he sent to my father on October 29, 1961, from Prague, Czechoslovakia. The photo shows the “Imperial” Sanatorium of Karlovy Vary from the foot of a towering statue on the top of which an impressive mountain buck is standing—the circle drawn by Czinege’s blue pen around the buck on the photo (as if the sight of the gun were already resting on the buck . . .) carried more than half of the message between two comrades who had already shared a great deal of hunting experience.

48. The price information is from Tóth, *A hírnév kötelez* (2005), 246–50; the data for the game bag are from MÉM Vadászati és Vadgazdálkodási Főosztály, “Jelentés az Állami Erdő.”

49. There were 3 passenger cars per 1,000 inhabitants in Hungary in 1960, and 23 in 1970—the same data for Britain are 108 and 215, and for Austria 57 and 161, respectively: György Péteri, “Streetcars of Desire: Cars and Automobility in Communist Hungary (1958–70),” *Social History* 34, no. 1 (February 2009), 3, 5. In 1970 only 6 out of 100 households in Hungary owned cars (Ignác Romsics, *Magyarország története a XX. században* [*The History of Hungary in the 20th Century*] [Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 1999], 479).

50. As Tóth recollected during my interview with him, in 1969 all the cooks of the National Farms were sent to the famous Gundel Restaurant in Budapest to learn the art of cooking and serving, but when high-ranking foreign guests were hosted, the NFGM relied on the services of the Gundel and Taverna restaurants and their personnel themselves.

51. Author’s interview with Sándor Tóth, Budapest, June 25–26, 2004.

52. Detailed budget data for 1971 can be found in MÉM Vadászati és Vadgazdálkodási Főosztály, “Jelentés az Állami Erdő.” The total for the mid-1980s is from the author’s interview with Sándor Tóth, Budapest, June 25–26, 2004.

53. Author’s interview with Sándor Tóth, Budapest, June 25–26, 2004. We should also keep in mind that first-class pork or beef was not always available in retail shops during the 1960s and 1970s. In 1960 the per capita meat consumption in Hungary was 49.1 kilograms, and by 1970 it had grown to 60.4 kilograms—see Romsics, *Magyarország története a XX. században*, 479.

54. Author’s interview with Sándor Tóth, Budapest, June 25–26, 2004.

55. For a useful historical overview of hunting in Hungary, from the beginnings to the state socialist era, see Pál Csőre, *A magyar vadászat története* (*A History of Hungarian Hunting*) (Budapest: Mezőgazda Kiadó, 1994).

56. This is interestingly documented in the private footage of György Pető, a young Jewish businessman of interwar Szeged—see the art documentary film of Péter Forgács, *Free Fall* (1996).

57. An instructive discussion of these tendencies can be found in an anonymous note made for Zoltán (Tildy), the president of the National Bureau of Nature Conservation (Országos Természetvédelmi Hivatal) in 1967. The author of the note undertook to discuss the question of why small-game populations declined so conspicu-

ously in the postwar era, in comparison to the interwar years (clearly indicated in the annual game bags of the early 1930s: around 2.2 million small game, as opposed to around 800,000 in the mid-1960s). The writer of the note offered to explain the phenomenon as a consequence of the changing social composition of the hunters' community and the increasingly utilitarian attitudes among them. The note, lacking title, date, and author, addressed to "Kedves Zoltán!" (Dear Zoltán!), is an attachment to Kálmán Tolnay's letter to "Mrs. Comrade Fock" (quite probably Prime Minister Fock's wife, who worked within forestry and game management, under Vice Minister Gyula Balassa), September 29, 1967, papers of the Ministry of Agriculture, Hungarian National Archives, MOL XIX-K-9-aj 28, d. 8, t. 1967. Tolnay had been asked to give his opinion about the note, which he now returned. Tolnay was, until sometime in the mid-1960s, the director of the Gödöllő Reserve; before 1956 he was an officer in Rákosi's much-dreaded State Security Authority; in the mid-1960s he became the director of the penitentiary in Dunaújváros. He was also the author of some popular cookbooks specializing in game.

58. Jenő Csalló, "Vadászok és vadászat" ("Hunters and Hunting"), *Magyar Hírlap*, January 8, 1973.

59. Revealingly, when the restrictions were ignored because a hunter of high standing wished to get a better trophy than what he had permission for, it was the professional hunter accompanying him who got penalized. See János Zoltán, *Legenda és valóság: Az Egyetértés és a Zalka Máté Vadásztársaság története* (*Myth and Reality: The History of the Egyetértés and Máté Zalka Hunting Clubs*) (Budapest?: Dénes Natur Műhely, 1996), 57.

60. See Tibor Valuch, "Changes in the Structure and Lifestyle of the Hungarian Society in the Second Half of the XXth Century," in *Social History of Hungary from the Reform Era to the End of the Twentieth Century*, by Gábor Gyáni, György Kövér, and Tibor Valuch (Boulder, Colo.: Social Science Monographs, 2004), 585.

61. Ferenc Baktai, "Nimródék kétmillió dollárja" ("The Two Million Dollars of the Nimródcs"), *Népszava*, February 24, 1965; Csalló, "Vadászok és vadászat"; "Nem kedvtelés csupán—Gazdálkodás" ("Not Only Pastime—An Economic Activity"), *Pestmegyei Hírlap*, January 12, 1975; Simányi, "Évente több mint tízmillió loves."

62. Shotguns were, however, used for hunting boar with special ammunition called "pearl bullets" (a single lead "pellet" fitting in size the diameter of the bore of the gun, called "*gyöngygolyó*" in Hungarian). These bullets were often homemade and could only be used with a particular kind of shotgun (the whole bore had to be of the same diameter). These guns worked only at short range (not more than thirty to forty meters) and with low precision. *Gyöngygolyós* hunting had a low status (a shotgun with such bullets was "the poor hunter's rifle"); the ammunition could only be used in boar hunting, in battues, where one had the chance to shoot at close range.

63. *Trófea Bemutató*, for 1970–75; and János Zoltán, *Legenda és valóság*, 75.

64. Author's interview with Sándor Tóth, Budapest, June 25–26, 2004.

65. Ibid.

66. Ferenc Stoflitz, leader of the Telki Reserve, who worked, before 1945, on the estates of Count Tisza, received a high-level decoration upon his retirement in 1966. Kádár also asked Károly Németh (chairman of the club, at the time first secretary of the Budapest Party Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party) to see to it that Stoflitz received invitations from Egyetértés to collective hunts (Kádár János Titkárságának iratai, MOL M-KS-288, f. 47, cs. 739 őe). In 1958 Kádár and his wife

gave Stoflitz a rifle as thanks for Stoflitz's "diligent efforts on behalf of our pastime" (Kádár János Titkárságának iratai, MOL M-KS-288, f. 47, cs. 720 őe.). According to Sándor Tóth, Stoflitz was Mrs. Kádár's favorite guide on her hunting excursions.

67. Baktai, "Nimródék kétmillió dollárja."

68. It was the case of the Sólyom (Falcon) Hunting Club in Vértesszöllős. In the minutes of their July 19, 1959, meeting (where the club was declared to be established), they included the names of István Dobi (president of the People's Republic) and Ernő Mihályfi (general secretary of the Patriotic People's Front) in the list of members. Indeed, they even "appointed" Dobi to be the "political officer" (*politikai felelős*) of the club, while Mihályfi got the honorable role of "master hunter" (*vadászmester*). The MAVOSZ apparently accepted the new club, but the Department of Hunting and Game Management of the Ministry of Agriculture put an end to their career in the bud. István Dénes's letter to MAVOSZ, September 5, 1959, copy, Archives of the Ministry of Agriculture, MOL XIX-K-13-a 174, d. 1959, 58-1/487/1959.

69. István Dénes's letter to MAVOSZ, September 5, 1959 (*italics added*).

70. This no doubt created tensions among the ranks of the apparatus class which reached the agenda of the highest political decision-making bodies. For example, the Central Committee Secretariat of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party at its meeting on March 25, 1968, discussed a detailed "Report Concerning the Social Status, Economic and Social Situation, and Moral Acknowledgment of Full-Time Political Functionaries." The report, as well as the minutes of the meeting, is in the Hungarian National Archives, MOL M-KS-288 f. 7, cs. 299 őe.

71. Thanks to this symbiosis, little Hungary became by the 1960s and 1970s a most attractive place for Western European hunting tourism. Hungarian wildlife management earned an international reputation manifest, among other ways, in the fact that the World Exhibition of Hunting in 1971 was located in Budapest.

72. See Jan Gross's important essay "War as Revolution" in *The Establishment of Communist Regimes in Eastern Europe, 1944-1949*, ed. Norman Naimark and Leonid Gibianskii (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1997), 17-40.

73. Part of the inspiration for the short discussion below is from George Konrád and Ivan Szelényi, *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979); and Iván Szelényi, *Új osztály, állam, politika* (*New Class, State, Politics*) (Budapest: Európa Kiadó, 1990).

74. A revealing document of the early phases of this expropriation of the old ruling classes by the emerging new one is the memoirs of Klára Szakasits, the daughter of Árpád Szakasits, leader of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party and one of the leaders of the Hungarian Workers' Party (after the merger of Communists and Social Democrats). On the one hand, this is an account in which the author talks about how upset she had been when she saw on a former neighbor a piece of her clothing from her apartment that had been abandoned in the late stage of the war. On the other hand, Mrs. Szakasits also tells her reader in great detail how she, thanks to the high positions of her father and of her husband, who was also a leading leftist Social Democrat, was offered and accepted in 1945 a large villa in one of the best areas of the Buda hills and was shown to a huge storehouse of "ownerless goods" (furniture, carpets, paintings, etc.) from which she could properly furnish her new house. Both the house and the furniture and other articles belonged to the former ruling classes of Hungary (among them high officials in public administration who had fled from the country as it was occupied by the Soviet Red Army, as well as Jewish victims of

the Holocaust and Arrow Cross rule from among the capitalist middle classes). Significantly, all these “ownerless goods” were disposed of by a governmental agency (Elhagyott Javak Kormánybiztossága) jointly controlled and run by the Communist and the Social Democratic parties. See Schifferné Klára Szakasits, *Fent és lent 1945–1950 (Up and Down 1945–1950)* (Budapest: Magvető Könyvkiadó, 1985), 63–76.

75. Looking beyond hunting and the boundaries of Hungary, an interesting case in point is the career of the dacha during the Soviet era, as discussed in Stephen Lowell’s superb book *Summerfolk: A History of the Dacha, 1710–2000* (Ithaca, N.Y., and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), 118.

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